



News Release

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Stay Safe This Winter – Inside and Out

Utah Department of Health Issues Holiday Safety Tips

(Salt Lake City, UT) – As families make plans for the holiday season, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) urges parents to put safety at the top of their “To Do” lists. Each year, an average of 660 Utahns die as a result of unintentional injuries. By taking the right prevention measures around homes and with gifts, you can reduce your chances of letting an injury spoil your holiday.

“The holiday season is very busy and can be stressful for families,” said Cyndi Bemis, Violence and Injury Prevention Program, UDOH. “In our attempt to get everything done, we sometimes don’t pay enough attention to injury prevention.”

For example, young children love to help out in the kitchen making holiday treats. But each year, UDOH data show that nearly 700 children are seen in hospital emergency rooms for burns and scalds. Many of these injuries happen in the kitchen, and most are preventable.

Emergency rooms stay busy during the winter months treating people who have fallen off ladders and roofs while doing their outdoor decorating. In addition, in 2002 more than 2,100 skiers and boarders were injured on the slopes and treated in Utah emergency rooms.

The following reminders will help keep you and your family safe inside and out this holiday season:

Around the House:

- Have a fire extinguisher close to the kitchen. Cooking mishaps are the leading cause of Utah house fires.
- Get your chimney cleaned and furnace inspected to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Leaking and poorly maintained gas appliances contribute to one in 10 residential fires.

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- Never use your oven or a charcoal or gas barbecue to heat your home. Never use a barbecue of any kind for cooking indoors.
- Closely supervise children in the kitchen at all times.
- Never hold a child while you are cooking.
- Put pans on back burners and turn handles toward the back of the stove.
- Never let children under age 10 remove hot foods from a microwave oven.
- Place hot foods away from the edges of counters and tables.
- Don't use tablecloths: Curious children tend to pull on them, spilling hot foods and liquids onto themselves.
- Keep poinsettias and mistletoe out of reach – they can make children and animals sick.
- Place candles in a candle jar or on surfaces that won't burn. Put them out before leaving home or going to bed. Never use lit candles on a Christmas tree.
- Don't let a fresh tree get dry; check the water every day.
- Keep candy, nuts and other small food items away from young children to prevent choking.
- Be extra careful when hanging holiday lights. Put up lights before the snow falls and roofs get slippery.

Gifts

- Choose age-appropriate gifts without small parts for young children.
- If you buy a child a bike, scooter (manual or electric), skateboard, inline skates or skate shoes, buy a helmet, too, and insist it be worn at all times.
- Bike helmets are also a great way to make sledding and tubing safer.
- If you buy skis or snowboards, buy a certified helmet made especially for snow sports.
- If you buy a snowmobile or ATV, buy helmets, too, and insist they be worn on every ride. Enroll all riders/users in an ATV safety class. Call the Utah State Parks and Recreation OHV Education office at 1-800-OHV-RIDE or visit www.stateparks.utah.gov for class times and locations.

For more safety information for this or any time of year, visit the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Web site at www.health.utah.gov/vipp.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.